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ABSTRACT

In exploring the connections among gender, schooling, and knowledge, this paper considers the relationships between, and the effects of silencing or expressing anger, in women and their work as educators. Data come from two action research projects: Women Teaching Girls retreats and the Exploring Gender and Knowledge. Each consisted of a series of retreats designed to enable educators to identify and reflect on how their gender socialization and gendered knowledge informed their educational practice. In both of these projects, which consisted of female teachers, counselors, administrators, and researchers (all of European American descent), the discussion of anger was prominent. While it was identified as an issue in personal relationships, it was also present in their work. Some of the women's stories are presented to offer insight into the dynamics that work to either encourage or stifle the expression of anger for some female teachers in schools. The paper notes that by having this safe place within the retreats, the women were able to work toward healing the wounds of a larger culture and dismantle institutions that work against the full and healthy development of their members. (Contains 20 references.) (SM)

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"Turning Anger into Knowledge": Exploring Anger and Advocacy With Women Educators

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Judith Dorney, Ph.D.

DORNEY, SUMMER, 2000

"What merged in my psyche were images of anger, women, teaching, and death. On some level school must have seemed a dangerous place for women teachers."

In exploring the connections among gender, schooling, and knowledge, this paper draws upon bodies of work which have been examined many times. However, the purpose of this essay is to frame a new question and begin to consider the relationships between and the effects of the silencing or expression of anger in women and their work as educators. The roots of this inquiry are located in my girlhood as I witnessed the various women in my life and their relationships with anger. But the questions framed here emerge from two particular action research projects, the "Women Teaching Girls Project" and the "Exploring Gender and Knowledge Project." Each consisted of a series of retreats designed to enable educators to identify and reflect on how their gender socialization and gendered knowledge informed their educational practice. In the first of these projects, consisting only of women, the discussion of anger was prominent. While this particular project was completed several years ago, I have returned to the data from this work, as well as theoretical work on gender and anger, in order to consider the value of anger in the educational work of women.

Path of Entry

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There is one prominent life experience at the heart of my desire to identify and understand the role of anger in the work of women educators. It is a memory centering on my mother, who was a teacher at St. Eugene's Elementary School. At the time, I was 11 and she was 52. It was a Friday night in late January. My mother, father and myself were in our small kitchen. She was describing to him an incident that occurred earlier in the day. I don't recall the content of the words. I do recall the tone and her actions. She was recounting a strong disagreement that she had with the principal of the school, Sr. Jean. My mother was angry. She showed us how, in expressing her feelings she moved physically away from Sr. Jean,

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backing into the wall. She moved her arm up to her face and let out a very loud and deep sound. It was not a sound I had heard from my mother. It was more the sound of a non-human animal. It was crusty. It came from below her belly. I had rarely seen my mother angry. I had never seen this form of anger. On Saturday afternoon she had a stroke. On Sunday afternoon she died.

While I was not aware of it at the time, what merged in my psyche were images of anger, women, teaching, and death. On some level, school must have seemed a dangerous place for women teachers. Certainly, anger was a very costly emotion. The sanctions against anger were reinforced for me by cultural and religious messages communicating the iconic standard of the "good woman." While on one level I have been able to consciously disentangle these messages and defuse their psychic power, on another level I see certain wisdom in recognizing that expressions of anger can be and have been deeply problematic for women in school. However, my three decades as a teacher and my work with teachers have also led me to see anger as a powerful tool for advocacy and change in school and in the world. The silenced anger of women in schools stunts the potential for both.

Theoretical Background

Within the last few years a number of educators have written about the development of the teacher as an essential element in the work of education. My research underscores the message of other educator/researchers like Maria Harris (1988), Parker Palmer (1983/1993, 1998), and Jane Tompkins (1996), who argue that the inner life of teachers, including their emotional and spiritual development, influences what happens in the classroom, with students, colleagues, and curricula.

Audre Lorde's essay on the erotic (1984) also speaks to the need for disciplined attentiveness to the inner life and suggests that teaching does have an erotic component. Lorde places the erotic, which she describes essentially as deep feeling and the scrutinization of feeling, at the heart of passionate living since this activity offers a continuing source of insight and connection to our deepest selves. If we want to encourage the growth of teachers as passionate learners, knowers engaged in a passionate relationship with the world, Lorde's claim holds great possibility and challenge for the development of teachers. Her two-fold process is reminiscent of Dewey's threefold process of inquiry which he asserts begins in feeling, moves to the articulation of a question and ultimately to its resolution (Garrison, 1997). Accordingly, if access to feelings in general, or certain feelings in particular, is blocked then development and knowledge will be constricted. Since schools are places that should support the continuing construction of knowledge, the typical absence of feelings from schooling can certainly be construed as problematic.

There are, of course, particular emotions which are documented as gendered and consequently unacceptable for public expression. These emotions are what Alison Jagger has called "outlaw emotions" -- feelings which are "conventionally unacceptable" (p. 160) since they violate the standards of what it means to be a good woman or a real man. Jagger challenges such prohibitions asserting that these emotions are, "appropriate if they are characteristic of a society in which all humans thrive, or if they are conducive to establishing such a society...it is appropriate to feel anger and perhaps disgust in those situations where humans are denied their full creativity or freedom" (pp. 161-62).

It seems no coincidence that Jagger identifies anger specifically as an outlaw emotion. Other women have written about anger and its potential as a force for change. The theologian Beverly Harrison (1984) claims that anger is an essential emotion in the work of love. It signals that something is wrong thus it provides necessary information for relational work. Carol Gilligan (1991) identifies anger as the "political emotion par excellence." Anger often provides the spark or fuel behind the work of justice. Anita Barrows, another psychologist, makes a distinction between rage and outrage.

With outrage, anger takes a leap into the arena of injustice...Outrage leads to resistance...we have learned that the oppressor may be undermined by resistance; not by superior force, but by fortitude, faith, conviction, defiance of authority. Outrage is the conjunction of rage and eros, where what informs rage is love and the absolute determination that what we love shall be preserved...its aim would be not to continue the cycle of suffering, but rather to interrupt it and establish something new in its stead (1996, p. 54).

Barrows goes on to ask, "Can we allow our anger not to dissolve, not to lose itself, until we have found what it is asking of us" (p. 56)? Her words call to mind Lorde's erotic process of feeling and the scrutinization of feeling in order to garner the knowledge embodied therein.

Because anger has been silenced in women, it is an outlaw emotion. And its existence as an outlaw emotion works to insure that it will be denied, that what might be learned from it will not develop and that the "desire to preserve what we love" will not be acted upon in the form of advocacy. Based on my experience with women who are also educators, the silencing of feeling knowledge takes on added urgency as I wonder what the righteous anger of women might do for schools? If women educators were able to find a way to tune into outrage as Barrows describes it -- "the conjunction of rage and eros," what would be interrupted and what new thing might be established.

In talking about what is silenced or acted upon by teachers, we want to remain mindful that these words and behaviors are witnessed by students. There is evidence in the work of Brown Gilligan (1992); Brown (1998); Debold, Wilson Malave (1993); Leadbeater Way (1996); Taylor, Gilligan Sullivan (1996) to suggest that girls do learn from what they observe in women. Girls also learn in their relationships with women. While additional work can be done to examine these connections more thoroughly, it makes sense to imagine that the cultural restrictions informing women's expression and action shape what girls see and hear and offer girls a sense of permission or transgression in speaking and acting in the world. Consequently, an intervention in the speech and action of women and men has a good chance of influencing the development of girls and boys.

Methodology

The "Women Teaching Girls" and "Exploring Gender and Knowledge" retreats were action research projects designed to intervene in the education of girls and boys by promoting a reflective awareness on the part of the adults who worked with them.

The first set of retreats was conducted with sixteen teachers, counselors, and administrators from the Laurel School for Girls in Ohio and three researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The retreats grew out of a larger project on girls' development headed by Lyn Brown and Carol Gilligan. They took place at the initial request of one of the teachers after a group of teachers decided to meet regularly to consider the messages they might be communicating to girls. At a faculty meeting, during the second year of the five year study, a few of the women spoke about how they silenced themselves at such meetings because of a desire to avoid conflict. Because this was also something the researchers were hearing the adolescent students admit as well, the teachers wondered about the possible connections between their own socialization and the socialization of their students.

In consultation with Pat Hall, an administrator at the school, I designed and facilitated two of the three retreats. I drew largely on the work of Maria Harris who in Women and Teaching (1988) identifies five generative themes necessary in an education for girls and women. The themes are: Silence, Remembering,

Mourning, Artistry, and Birthing. Based on these themes, I developed a curriculum for the retreats (Dorney, 1991). The process was akin to an experience of consciousness raising and it strongly influenced the relationships among all the women. It provided a space for the women to speak up and out both individually and collectively within the retreat community and later in the public world of the school. Two of the three retreats were taped and transcribed and I interviewed each woman participant three to nine months after the last retreat.

There were two "Exploring Gender and Knowledge" retreats, designed and facilitated by myself and Dr. Craig Flood. The participants were female and male middle school educators from nine schools across New York State. We developed a curriculum grounded in but different from the "Women Teaching Girls" retreats. In considering the influence of the retreats on the participants, Dr. Flood and I drew on field notes, correspondence and interviews with participants after the final retreat (Dorney Flood, 1997).

Anger was a theme for the women in both projects and while it was identified as an issue in personal relationships it was also very present in their work. Although anger was acknowledged in the analysis of each retreat experience, it was not a major focus. For the scope of this essay I returned specifically to the data from the "Women Teaching Girls" project in order to look for the presence of anger and how it was linked to silence or expression. The questions I posed at this juncture were:

1. Where is anger identified?

2. In what context?

3. Was it silenced? If so, why or how?

4. Was it expressed or used for action? If so, why or how?

5. What fostered the expression?

6. What knowledge does it suggest?

I have chosen to highlight a portion of the dialogue from the second "Women Teaching Girls" retreat and interview excerpts from three of the women participants. The sample of voices is small. Nevertheless, I have found that these women offer insight into the dynamics that work to either encourage or stifle the expression of anger for, at least some, female teachers in schools.

The women represented here are all of European American descent. They are well educated and middle class. They were, at the time of the retreats, between the ages of thirty five and fifty. Their social location may make them especially vulnerable to the "good girl" standard identified below. However, this does not mean that other women educators might not be held to this standard in schools where white, middle class norms are still dominant.

The Stories: Claiming Anger Through Connection

The second retreat began with the women in pairs responding to four questions. They were: What has been the best thing to come out of our work together for you? What has been the best thing for the school? What has been the hardest thing for you? What has been the hardest thing for the school?

Ann and Betty were conversation partners. Betty had been the school psychologist at Laurel for 4 years.

Ann had been one of the top administrators in the upper school for 3 years. In commenting on how the first retreat had influenced her life, Betty admitted:

> And I think over the course of time I have really come to realize that the problems that I face have a lot to do with the fact that I always want to be the good little girl. And that so much of the message that I learned in my model of my mother and how she was, was to be the good little girl and you were loved, and you got all these positive things and everyone thought you were wonderful. And I really see that impacting more and more at Laurel... (Dorney, 1991, p. 73)

She went on to suggest that because they are primarily a female faculty, "we all got into being good little girls" and "we confuse our professional roles with our personal relationships." Anger is a challenge to this good girl model of behavior. As Betty continued she admitted that, "...I really have a hard time being angry" (p. 74).

Her conversation partner, Ann, picked up this thread of conversation. Contrary to Betty's experience, she noted that anger had been a "source of energy" for her. Whenever Ann had been in situations where she had to change her life "for the sake of [her] mental health, [her] energy came from being angry" (p. 74). Although Ann saw her anger as a positive the difficulty for her came in feeling that this source of energy was not valued at Laurel. She asserted that, "the hardest thing for me, and of course this work has made me get much more in touch with it, the hardest thing at Laurel school is that there is no place to be angry" (p. 74). With this admission, Ann delineates the contours of acceptable professional behavior within the school. So that even though she has individually been able to resist the "good girl" mandate against anger, the school culture prohibits anger. This is too much for Ann to take on. She molds herself to the school's image of what is appropriate and valued. And although anger is a source of personal energy in confronting a hard situation (of which there are many in just about every school), Ann silences herself.

At this point, Carol Gilligan entered the conversation with a challenge. She cut to the heart of much of what had been said. Carol raised questions about the kind of relationships possible when this kind of silencing is part of the dynamic. "The best thing for me in this [retreat work]," she said, "and the hardest thing for me in this is how to be in what I do. And to think that if I'm not in what I do, who's doing it? And what am I doing with my life? And if I am in it, I mean, will I survive? Will anybody else survive? You know, isn't this sort of terribly disruptive" (p. 75)? The psychologist Anita Barrows in her essay, "The Light of Outrage: Women, Anger, and Buddhist Practice," poses a similar question. "Is our longing to be 'good' greater than our longing to be whole" (1996, p. 55)? Several of the women spoke following Carol's questions. But, for the most part, they focused on the potential losses associated with speaking up and the discussion shifted to a focus on power differences and the risk inherent in speaking one's mind or disagreeing with an administrator. Jean, an administrator in the elementary branch of the school who had been at Laurel for 13 years, mentioned the "humiliation" that can come from being silenced publicly at a meeting by the head of the school, also a woman. As Jean spoke directly about her humiliating experience I was aware that in that situation there were probably other women from the group present. I asked, "...where are you all when Jean needs to speak and is silenced?...How can you help each other to speak..."(p. 78)? These questions signaled the entry of a new focus in our conversation and the issue of collusion ultimately became a critical examination for us in the remainder of our work together. Carol inserted a question about what it is girls observe and learn from women when women opt not to express authentic and, at times, disruptive feelings.

Connie, who had been at Laurel for 6 years and who worked with the primary level students, took on Carol's question. She spoke, I later realized, from a place of experience as one who often was willing to

put herself out there. Connie did speak her mind and was often the only one who did so. Thus, she often found herself at odds with female colleagues and dismissed by other administrators who were looking for agreement rather than a genuine response. With some emotion, she asked, "How many times can I buck it and demonstrate to the children that I lose and get squished down again, or you know, humiliated or whatever, and then set them up for a very uncomfortable thing of, 'Hey, not me'" (p. 79). She then turned to me and said, "And that's why I like what you were saying, that together, supported it can work. But if you try to do it in isolation by yourself, you keep demonstrating over and over again to your students why you shouldn't do this. Because you are going to be humiliated" (p. 79).

These conversations were essential in isolating some of the internalized knowledge and behaviors of the women both as individuals and as members of a group. For the purpose of summation I want to suggest that these internalized messages and responses to the desire to express one's ideas, to make one's genuine contribution, and the injunction not to feel or act on certain feelings as women and as educators resulted in behaviors that created a rather repressed environment in the school. There are multiple consequences to such repression. If we consider only the effects on the construction of knowledge we can reasonably ask what happens to inquiry in a school when people live largely out of fear, when people cannot get angry?

During the third retreat one focus of our work was analyzing and responding to a decision that had been made by Joan, the head of the school. There was a conference being planned to announce the findings from the Laurel work to a national audience. The Harvard researchers would all be presenting different dimensions of the work. However, no one except Joan, the head of Laurel, and a few other administrators would be in attendance because school was in session. Joan wanted us to have a mini-conference at the school following the conference. Everyone in our retreat group felt this was unacceptable, but it was the Laurel women who imagined a response. Through much discussion, they decided that all faculty and staff should be able to attend the conference. They proposed switching a professional day that was scheduled for May to the April conference day in order to accommodate this. They consulted with the hotel to insure that seventy-five more people could be accommodated. They decided they would all meet with Joan to propose their plan. If she refused, they agreed that each one of them would take a personal day and attend the conference but their first choice was to provide access for all the faculty. They met with Joan who thought it was a wonderful idea. The day of the conference all Laurel faculty were present and the women retreats participants lead discussion groups on the work we had on the retreats. Together, they had disarmed their own powerful image of the head of the school and this enabled them to act. What moved them initially was a sense of injustice, to some extent outrage, that faculty would be overlooked on this occasion. Because they had come together as a group they could also identify and face the fear that would prohibit them from speaking and acting on their own behalf and as advocates for the larger faculty. One of the women admitted being "nervous" and "scared" that such a stance might cost her job. The cornerstone of their action was the ability to feel their anger and their fear and to stand together in responding to these feelings and to the knowledge they revealed. At the end of May and the following October I interviewed each of the women. I focus here on the words of Betty, Ann, and Connie. Each describes a form of advocacy that involves breaking a pattern of collusion.. Central to this shift is a valuing of anger as a source of valuable information. These are small instances of change but as one of the women noted, if we can have the "courage to act in a small way...it might begin to change the structure a little bit" (Dorney, 1991, p. 111).

Betty

I asked Betty what she knew now that she didn't know before our work together. Thoughtfully, she replied:

> I think what I really know is that I need----, I can't be happy, truly happy, not listening to what I truly feel. By trying to either not listen to that voice or deny[ing] that voice or deciding not to give expression to that voice, any of those, I pay a real price. And I don't have to pay that price. I do have a choice about it. And I don't think that I always recognized that either I had that choice or the price I was paying (Dorney, 1991, p. 145).

She then spoke particularly about the conversation the morning of the second retreat between herself, Ann, and Carol. That discussion helped her to reconsider relationships and "what kind of relationship [it] is if your needs aren't met and you can't be angry" (Dorney, 1991, p. 146). This awareness had a profound influence on her relationships with her family and she described three incidents where she responded differently to her husband and children than she would have before that discussion. But she also described a change in the nature of her responses at school. One particular incident involved her refusing to facilitate a meeting between one of the women administrators and her staff. This woman, Leslie, had received some negative evaluations from her staff. Leslie decided she wanted to have a meeting with them, go through the evaluations, and talk with the staff members about what she thought she could do to respond to them and then invite their responses. Joan, the head of the school asked Betty, as the school psychologist, to facilitate the meeting against Leslie's will. Betty refused. Joan told Betty the meeting would happen whether she chose to facilitate or not, suggesting that by opting out of this she might make the situation worse. Betty replied, "That might be...but I can't be a part of something I don't agree with" (Dorney, 1991, p. 146).

In the past, Betty said, her tendency would have been to facilitate the meeting, because someone had asked her for help and because she might be able to "smooth out a situation" or "justify" her collusion in a bad situation feeling that if she went along in this way she might have a greater impact in other ways. She no longer believed this to be true. Betty did not feel she had to protect Leslie. Leslie had to do that for herself. But Betty did want Leslie to be clear about what she wanted and she wanted to be an "advocate" for Leslie as well as herself. Betty described her feelings when Joan asked her to facilitate the meeting. Betty could feel her anxiety level rising. She felt a need to "breathe deeper" and her "heart beating faster." In the past she would not have attended to these visceral responses but she found herself asking, "Why am I feeling this way?" And my first response was, "Leslie, I have to tell you this feels wrong to me" (Dorney, 1991, p. 147).

She described her new found tendency to stay with these emotional and bodily responses and claim them as a source of knowledge. In situations she is now more likely to ask, "Why am I responding emotionally?" "What is this touching in me" (Dorney, 1991, p. 148)? And she listens to that voice. She no longer finds it tenable to split her emotional and professional responses. She has come closer to healing the "divided heart" as Parker Palmer (1998) identifies it. And her ability to act as an advocate comes from her ability to see a situation from a place of wholeness rather than a place of fear or a "good woman" injunction to smooth things over.

Ann

When I interviewed Ann she was no longer at Laurel school. She had a new position at another private school in the Midwest and much of what she spoke about in her interview was her decision to leave Laurel and her changed way of being there after the third retreat and her decision to leave. Her decision to leave came from her deepening awareness that she could not be herself and remain at Laurel. The cost of this division was finally too great.

Speaking directly, Ann said, "What I know is that if I say aloud everything that I believe and feel in professional and social situations that it will be unacceptable or disruptive or will lead to rejection or distancing that I don't want" (Dorney, 1991, p. 150). But part of the paradox of silencing oneself is that, "a lot of energy goes into being careful instead of living your life...[and] the energy one expends in being careful...becomes habitual as well" (Dorney, 1991, p. 150). Leaving Laurel was necessary for Ann in order to break that habit.

She further explained that before she left Laurel her relationships with colleagues began to shift, at least in part, because of her desire to speak and act from a less divided place. She noted that these conversations, "would not be called good administrative policies at times [but]...it was really being able to say what I believed and what I thought and being able to express the feelings I had about things that happened" (Dorney, 1991, p. 151). One of her male colleagues commented that she had never "talked like this before." Although Ann felt he was a bit uncomfortable about this more direct communication, she added that, "at the same time the nature of our conversation about other things got funnier and warmer...out of that I think came a trust from him that I hadn't had before...so in a sense it dropped the barrier for just the human stuff to happen" (Dorney, 1991, p. 151).

While the shift in Ann's way of being is not a direct response to anger, it was anger that helped her identify the problems for her at Laurel. Her silencing and the incongruence of her feelings, speech, and action made her angry. When she was able to find a group and a place at Laurel where she could be angry and scrutinize the anger, she was able to take action on her own behalf and on behalf of more honest collegial relationships. She highlighted the importance of the group in this process:

> The need in me to act on the effects of being silenced at Laurel school was made authentic by my participation in the group...to get in touch with my own self and what I've always known and to act courageously about it. And it was the experience of the group, not just the support, but the experience of the group...that made it possible for me to act that way for the first time in a public setting, which I hadn't done before. (Dorney, 1991, p. 152)

I do not know if Ann has found the need for such a group in her new school or if entering with this determination to speak her truth has been sufficient for her to continue to do so. She did admit, at the time of our interview, that there was a "greater congruence" between what she felt and how she acted publicly. It is my belief that over the long haul we need not only an attitude and desire for wholeness but, as Ann herself said, "a place to be angry" or an outlaw community to support those efforts.

Connie

Connie, a reading specialist and associate director of the primary level of Laurel school, had the habit of being outspoken. Her tendency at Laurel as well as at previous schools had been to speak her mind. The issue for Connie was that there had not been a direct connection/awareness of feelings.. What she illustrated in her interview was that this emotional awareness was essential in helping her to respond differently to colleagues and to students. Early in the interview she commented that in spite of her intuition that particular relationships were inauthentic she could, "never tell you what I was after...Now I know the words to talk about it, to bring the feelings out" (Dorney, 1991, p. 166). Emphasizing the importance of connecting with her feelings she added, "I have been able to take what was anger and turn it into knowledge" (Dorney, 1991, p. 167).

Additional conversation clarified what some of this knowledge might be. Prior to our work together

Connie felt isolated from colleagues due to her willingness to speak out. Her participation in the retreat groups gave her new insight into the reasons why women silence themselves and don't support each other. She described herself as more "tolerant" toward women.. Their knowledge, "May be buried so deep ...that we'll never see it in this lifetime, but I know it's there. I know that. And I didn't know that before. So it's almost as though I have seen this core or this soul or whatever..." (Dorney, 1991, p. 167).

When I asked Connie if she could describe a situation in school in which this newly constructed knowledge was influential, she narrated a story about having to discipline a fourth grade girl. The grade level seems particularly significant since it was in speaking with fourth graders that we first heard a shift in girls' voices toward silencing. The incident involved three girls and one computer. One girl had been using it for ten minutes. There were ten minutes remaining of class time and two girls who had not yet used it. When the second girl started her turn, the third girl, Katie, suggested they each take five minutes. The second girl refused. Katie thought that was unfair and she removed the disk from the computer so no one could use it. There was some kind of altercation and Katie scratched the second girl. Katie was sent to Connie.

Connie said:

> And I realized at this moment, and this is really significant, as a result of this work, I realized that the reason I have always been uncomfortable with this {disciplining} is because I have to act, respond in a way I know is wrong. But that's what the institution expects...that being...the traditional kinds of things. "You have to be a good little girl and very cooperative and not get into arguments and not get into fights and get along with everybody and love the world and everything will be hunky dorey" (Dorney, 1991, p. 169). But this time Connie asked the girl to tell her what happened. She told me what happened. I said, "Okay, you know, what were you feeling?" ...it came down to validating the fact that she was angry, that she had a right to be angry, that it's okay to say it...the only thing that I am unhappy about is that you chose to hurt her physically. That is really bad. We can't do that...And then we talked about what she could have done instead ...what would have been a better way to resolve it? What would have worked for her...I said, "What are you going to do about this?" I wasn't going to step in as an institution. I explained to her that if she got into a physical thing again we would be singing a different tune...But this was the first time she was involved in something like this... And she decided that she needed to talk to the girl that she had scratched...I said, "Why would you want to do that?" It turns out that they were friends. We talked about that. "What would you accomplish by talking to her?' "Maybe she would forgive me" Katie replied (Dorney, 1991, p. 169). Taking this approach with Katie made Connie feel good. She explained why. Because I had allowed her to be herself...I hadn't lied the lie...I hadn't disciplined her and told her...it's not okay to be angry. I had hung with the truth. As she was talking to me she started to cry about why she felt badly that she [had] done it and what the risk was of having hurt someone and maybe she would lose her friend. I started crying...But I felt her pain. Her pain was real. So I allowed her to have whatever was real to be there and have it be okay...This work has enabled me to get what is going on, what matters to these kids. What is it they really care about? (Dorney, 1991, p. 169)

With an awareness of the knowledge embodied in anger, Connie was able to allow Katie to hold onto her experience of being angry and to consider the reasons for it. While not negating the feelings, Connie also helped Katie to see the inappropriateness and potential danger of her physical response to her anger and she guided Katie to an imaginative vision of other potential responses. Connie's ability to do this can be construed as an act of advocacy for Katie. In this situation a girl was told by a woman that anger is an

important feeling and she is helped to think about her angry feelings and how she can respond to them. This is a step toward holding onto feelings, voice, and what one knows from one's experience. If girls had more women guides like this perhaps there would be fewer girls who lose themselves, who become divided in adolescence.

Conclusion: An Outlaw Community - A Homeplace for Women Educators

In her essay, "Homeplace: a site of resistance" (1990), bell hooks describes the radical political activity of homeplace construction. This involved African-American people, primarily women, creating sites where racism could be opposed and the internalized messages uncovered and exorcised. It was a place of activism, advocacy, and healing. hooks writes, "We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that 'homeplace', most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits" (p. 42). Certainly the retreat work seemed to provide that kind of homeplace where spirits were nurtured and healed through the active deconstruction and resistance of messages of oppression and repression. What would it take for schools, which are also largely in the hands of women, to be made into such places?

Terry Tempest Williams, in her essay exploring the connections between women and homemaking, resistance and advocacy asks, "What are our preoccupations as women" (1994, p. 134)? Her question cuts to the heart of the matter. What is of ultimate value? What are we doing to make the schoolplace, a homeplace, and a site of resistance and advocacy? Tempest Williams suggests that part of the answer might lie in the visible presence of wild cards. As she describes the wild card she suggests that each woman would carry a deck of cards:

> wild cards -- cards that could not only portend the future but create it. If a woman saw an act that violated the health and integrity of her community, she would leave a card on-site. If she was moved by a particular piece of legislation on behalf of or against the land, she would dash off a card to her senator or representative. And if she found her self in a board of directors meeting and the truth as she felt it was not being told, she would place all her cards on the table as a sign that the games of men are not the games of women. (p. 135)

Both hooks and Tempest Williams suggest a dimension of what I see as evident in the work here described. It is necessary to have a space, a place and even a small group of women who can create an environment designed to heal the wounds of a larger culture and dismantle, even in small ways, institutions that work against the full and healthy development of their members. Part of the work of healing and resistance involves claiming anger and learning from it. When anger is denied in homes and in schools, change is unlikely. There is no wild card to mark the violation. Consequently, the work of healing and advocacy has no context.

The presence of this kind of outlaw community or homeplace enabled Betty, Ann, and Connie to throw down their wild cards. In so doing they helped to make the school a safe space to be angry and a site where the joining of feelings and thoughts contributed to more holistic development and an active relationship to knowledge.

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